



EQUALITY

RICHARD L. EVANS, from *The Spoken Word*, pp. 94-96 (Harper & Brothers, New York, 1945). Mr. Evans—editor, lecturer, author of several books and many articles—is the producer, writer, and “voice” on the “Spoken Word” portion of the Sunday radio program of the Salt Lake City Tabernacle Choir and Organ.

“WE hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Thus wrote the patriots of America in 1776. And now the question arises, and has often arisen: What is the meaning of equality as applied to men? Does it mean that all men shall be alike? Does it mean that all men shall be leveled arbitrarily to a common plane? Does it mean that those who have endowments beyond the average shall be restrained from making a better place for themselves and for others? Does it mean that those who are content with idleness and indolence shall be lifted artificially to an estate beyond what they deserve or could enjoy? Surely it does not—and cannot—mean any of these things. For if it did, there would be no reward for the man who looks beyond the present. There must be equality, yes: equality in the right to voice our views; equality in the right to worship according to the dictates of conscience; equality before the law; equality at the ballot box; equality in the right to work without paying tribute to anyone for the privilege—an equality not circumvented by political pressure, not denied to minority groups, not withheld from the humble, the friendless, or the needy—

but not that warped and mistaken “equality” which would push down the able and push up the indolent; not the kind of “equality” that would retard willing men to the pace of the unwilling, or that puts unsteady props beneath backsliders; not that “equality” which would reward them who “toil not, neither do they spin.” No doubt all the trees in the forest fundamentally have equal rights and privileges. But they don’t all grow to the same height, and it would seem rather foolish to cut the tall trees down to the level of the lesser ones to satisfy the theoretical demands of an unnatural formula. And it would seem just as preposterous ruthlessly to pull the short trees up to the height of the tall ones. If we did, it would mean their uprooting—they would wither and die, as all things do unless they grow up by themselves from their own roots. And so, to those who would like to eliminate differences among men, it should be said that if it were possible to do so, progress would cease. Equality cannot therefore mean to bring all men low. It must mean opportunity for each man to rise to those heights to which his energies and abilities will take him—“and allow all men the same privilege”—to the end that progress may continue, and that thereby all will find benefit. Equality which means less than this is not equality at all—it is slavery.

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